

# Damselfly groups



American Rubyspot



Vivid Dancer



Boreal Bluet "wheel"



Plains Forktail



Great Spreadwing

## Checklist of Common Damselflies

### Broad-winged damsels

American Rubyspot

### Spreadwings

- Great Spreadwing
- Spotted Spreadwing
- Northern Spreadwing

### Pond damsels

- Taiga Bluet
- Northern Bluet
- Double-striped Bluet
- Boreal Bluet
- Tule Bluet
- Familiar Bluet
- Arroyo Bluet
- Rainbow Bluet
- Orange Bluet
- Plains Forktail
- Western Forktail
- Vivid dancer
- Western Red Damsel

**Hint:** Spreadwings hold their wings ~ 45 degrees to the sides of the body. Bluets hold their wings parallel to their bodies. Dancers hold their wings raised slightly over their abdomens.

# Resources

## Books

- Wild Guide: Dragonflies, Cynthia Berger
- Dragonflies of the Southwest, Kathy Biggs
- Dragonflies of the Colorado Front Range: A Photographic Guide, Ann Cooper
- Dragonflies Q&A Guide: Fascinating Facts About Their Life In the Wild, Ann Cooper
- Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Rocky Mountains, Robert DuBois
- Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West, Dennis Paulson

## Websites & App

- <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/dragonflies.htm> — for common local species
- <http://www.odonatacentral.org/> — for state- and country-wide information
- <http://www.migratorydragonflypartnership.org> — dedicated to understanding and conserving dragonfly migration

**Dragonfly ID** (available from the Apple Store) — check what species have been reported from an area you are exploring.



Dragonflies and damselflies have exoskeletons and must shed to grow. They do this many times as larvae in the water. The final molt (shedding) happens when water-based larvae crawl out onto a stem, twig or rock, split out of their too-tight shells, and become flying adults. It takes a while for them to become strong fliers and newly-hatched "tenerals" are fragile and vulnerable—easy prey.

Look for dragonfly and damselfly hatch cases on cattails, twigs, handy trees, (even boardwalks and piers at fishing ponds).



**Parks & Open Space**

## Common Dragonflies



Twelve-spotted Skimmer

## of Boulder County

Dragonflies and damselflies are insects in the order Odonata, or "toothed ones." They are fierce predators, both as larvae growing in the water and adults after they emerge. They are told apart by these features:

### Dragonflies

- Sturdy, strong fliers
- Perch with wings out to side (see picture above)
- Front and hind wings a different shape
- Eyes touch, or nearly touch, at top of head

### Damselflies

- Delicate, weak fliers
- Perch with wings folded over abdomen
- Front and hind wings the same shape
- Eyes separated by gap— a "dumbbell" look



"Toothed ones" - the jaws of a dragonfly larva!



# Dragonfly groups

## Darners . . . strong fliers that rarely perch



In a “mating wheel, a male clasps the female’s head with tip of his abdomen while the female reaches with her abdomen to collect sperm from underneath his second segment. This leads to the heart-shaped arrangement seen to the left.

Paddle-tailed Darners in a “wheel”

Many species stay attached, or “in tandem,” with the male guarding his mate while she lays eggs. This is one way he ensures the offspring are really his!



Common Green Darners “in tandem”

## Clubtails . . .



Pale Snaketail

## Emeralds . . .



Dot-winged Baskettail

## Checklist of Common Dragonflies

### Darners

- Variable Darner
- Paddle-tailed Darner
- Shadow Darner
- Blue-eyed Darner
- Common Green Darner

### Clubtails

- Pale Snaketail
- Sulphur-tipped Clubtail
- Horned Clubtail

### Emeralds

- Dot-winged Baskettail
- American Emerald
- Mountain Emerald

### Skimmers

- Calico Pennant
- Halloween Pennant
- Western Pondhawk
- Eastern Pondhawk
- Dot-tailed Whiteface
- Widow Skimmer
- Twelve-spotted Skimmer
- Four-spotted Skimmer
- Blue Dasher
- Eastern Amberwing
- Common Whitetail
- Variegated Meadowhawk
- White-faced Meadowhawk
- Striped Meadowhawk
- Band-winged Meadowhawk
- Autumn Meadowhawk
- Wandering Glider
- Black Saddlebags

## Skimmers . . . . . mostly perchers and easier to watch!



Halloween Pennants



Widow Skimmer male



Common Whitetail male



Blue Dasher male



Eastern Amberwing male

Adult males and females of many dragonfly species look quite different from each other. In some cases, you might easily mistake the male and female as belonging to entirely different species.

Immature males often show female coloring. And both sexes take a while after hatching to develop their fully-adult colors. It is not surprising that identification is a challenge.

One way to learn the male-female color differences is to watch mating or laying pairs—wheels and tandems—to see which males and females belong together.



Western Pondhawk (F & M)



Four-spotted Skimmer



Autumn Meadowhawks



Black Saddlebags